

STANFORD UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

STANFORD MEDICAL CENTER
PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA 94304

DEPARTMENT OF GENETICS

Area Code 415
321-1200

Mr. Stephen S. Rosenfeld
THE WASHINGTON POST

Dear Mr. Rosenfeld-

I appreciate your taking time to write me about your editorial of July 3. I will try not to prolong the exchange.

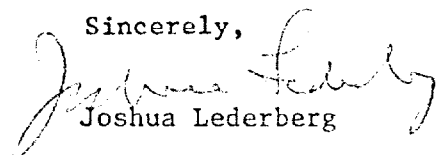
Yes, I think that confusion about how fat the national science budget is seriously undermines the constructive efforts you ask. How can I begin to justify the claim of science and science-education if my listener starts with the conviction that I am only a reflex complainer about not getting a regular 15% increase on a base of over \$17 billion. With that kind of pre-judgment (and the POST is very influential in reinforcing self-comforting views, even if you don't always sell your positive messages) we can't even get congressmen to listen. It's not as if this were a unique error-- there is a whole crowd of John Lears spending their full time at debunking science, and pressing these confusions and exaggerations.

You did quote Greenberg's book; I hope you will also give equal weight to his more recent analysis. This year's cutbacks are going to hurt the universities, and badly.

Even so, I think I would agree that other national programs probably deserve even higher priority. The scientists' screams have a factual basis (though of course you are right, there is a hysterical tone to them), but they are simply one particularly vocal reaction to the morass the country is being led into on every front, always excepting highway construction.

Scientists do accept the responsibility of justifying the social support of their work -- there are of course many different answers, and they are not all convincing. We do serve on PSAC, NIH, NSF, NIMH etc. advisory councils, and so on, and through these channels we also try to advise on how best to take the bites. But we would be doing the country a disservice if we did not now warn as clearly as we know how of the longrange consequences of this kind of retrenchment.

Sincerely,


Joshua Lederberg